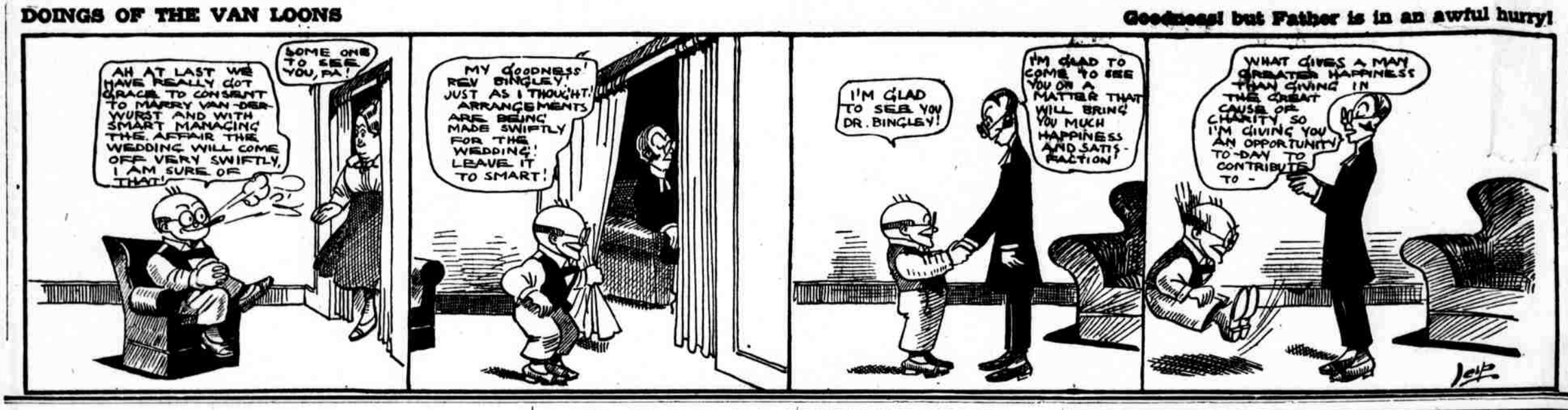
DOINGS OF THE VAN LOONS

Goodness! but Father is in an awful hurry!



The Business Year

War and Its Results

.PEACE BRINGS DEMOBLIZATION PROBLEMS

Extracts From Bradstreet's Review

War certainly held the center of the stage in 1918, and the promise of the American Executive that "force without limit" would be exerted by this country in the great battle for freedom was brilliantly fulfilled. So immersed were the American people in the conflict that war may be said to have become their chief, indeed almost their only business. Every energy was bent to the purpose either of fashioning the weapons of warfare or of providing men to use them, of supplying needs of the fighting forces and of the vastly larger number of those who merely aided these forces, the while that supplies of food for our own men and our allies abroad were forthcoming without stint, except where American men, women and children, on the mere request of our government, forbore to eat their normal foods in order that our army and our allies, armies and civilian populations should have enough. Thus it was that ordinary civilian trade took, as it were, a back seat, that many non-warlike occuptions were curtailed or entirely suspended, and that every one could feel that whether on the battlefield, in the office, in the factory or on the farm, all were engaged in a common cause and for a common end. Then just as the mighty machine that had been built up for war purposes began to function powerfully and victoriously, the enemy's collapse came, and the remainder of the year was given over to the process of demoblizing the industries single-mindedly devoted to war were directed back to peaceful lines, and the processes of unharnessing trade and of unfixing prices went forward with as much if not greater speed than had the work of diverting peaceful energies to war-like purposes. These readjustments, which at the time of writing are still in process, with the unsettlement inseparable therefrom, and the uncertainty prevailing as to future price levels, now that the great urge of government buying was removed, gave a quieter tone to wholesale trade and industry in the closing months, while the influenza epidemic early and natural conservatism bred by displacement of many thousands of workers, operated to hold down retail trade, which was only partly recouped by an excellent holiday demand in the closing weeks of the year.

The statement was frequently made in 1917 that, great as had been our work of organization for war, there was very little of surface indications to show it, and that one might almost imagine that no war was being waged. This was emphatically not the case in 1918. War in many of its grim phases was brought home to us by the sending of two million men abroad and the gathering of another two million in American camps, by the voting by Congress of an army without limit, by the stripping of our industries of its best men, by the extension of the draft ages to include all males from eighteen to forty-five, by the operations of the German submarine murderers on our coast, by the growing list of casualties, by the mounting up of war costs to almost unbelievable heights. In 1918, too, all the early delusions as to the causes and nature of the war were dissinated, and its true character as a life and death struggle of decency and civilization against all that was abhorrent and decadent became manifest . That the sending over of our armies to France was not merely a question of numbers carried but also of quality of fighting material sent, was proved by the splendid work of our soldiers, who, our friends the allies admit, arrived just in time to turn the scale of the conflict and to block the way of the Germans to the channel ports and to Paris, and later, in conjunction with our allies, under the supreme command of the brilliant French Marshal Foch, broke the German lines, expelled the invader from northern France and from Belgium and finally, by the terms of the armistice asked for by the beaten foe, established the Allied line far within the enemies' border, constituting a new "Watch on the Rhine" pending a final peace settlement. It will probably be the verdict that our full strength had not been put forth when the collapse of the boasted efficient Teutonic combination was registered in the German surrender and revolt and the final abdication of power by the self-styled War Lord and his confederates Thus this latest and greatest crusade was won, peace returned to the earth, and the preparations for the conference at Versailles gave peculiar emphasis to the Christmas season and were fraught with favorable auguries for the ushering into the world of a truly Happy New Year.

Over Four Years of War Ended.

With the great war apparently ended, a glance over the big events of the four years and nearly four months additional that it lasted may not be out of the way. First of all, it needs to be said that no human being expected it to last the length of time it did, nor that the financial costs thereof (probably $180,000,000,000 to $200,000,000,000) could have been so sucessfully borne by the world. As to cost of life, no definite measure can be had as yet, but probably between 9,000,000 and 10,000,000 fighting men laid down their lives, while massacre, disease and starvation may have taken as many more civilians. Of our own part in it, it can be said that while our financial costs have been great, perhaps $22,000,000,000 to date, our own loss of life, directly due to the hostilities or to disease and attendant evils, possibly 100,000 men, while regrettable in our eyes, was slight compared with either those of any of our foes or of the allies.

Feeding Our Allies

In the work of feeding our allies, a really marvelous plan of substitution of other cereals for wheat was first necessary in 1918, and to bring this about, the 5 1-2 to 6 bushels per capita of domestic consumption at the outset was cut down to below three bushels. The average for the entire year was not over four bushels, and whereas at the outset of the cereal year 1918 a total export of only 40,000,000 bushels was estimated as possible from our deficient 1917 harvest, we actually shipped 130,000,000 bushels without apparent injury to our own population, which accepted wheatless and meatless days, record high levels of prices, some rather drastic limitations of individual liberties, and a myriad of other sacrifices, as something all in the "day's work" of winning the war. In doing this, by the way, the free stock of wheat was reduced to a ten days' supply by the time the new crop was available.

Super-War Prices.

Up to the middle of the year the movement of commodity prices, if a slight seasonal reaction in March be excepted, was quite steadily, upward, reflecting the needs of our allies, the high buying power of our own people and, last but not least, the concentrated buying of our government for the army needs (4,000,000) men being in arms and a still greater number being in prospect). The August 1 number, however, reflecting, as it did, government price-fixing of cotton goods, showed a decline and the following numbers a rather uncertain but, on the whole, downward trend until December 1, when, contrary to many expectations based on the return of peace, the Index Number moved sharply upward, due to the rise in meats and dairy products, which of course, are and have been in a class by themselves, owing to war demands. Illustrative of this, it might be said, a selected list of meats, breadstuffs, dairy products and groceries on July 1, 1918, showed gains of 65 to 160 per cent, as compared with the prices ruling at the outset of the great war in 1914. Bradstreet's approximate index number of Dec. 1, shows that the prices as a whole are only seven-tenths to 1 per cent below the high point of July 1, are 8 per cent above Dec. 1 a year ago, and 118 per cent above the level ruling on August 1, 1914. Compared with April 1, 1917, on the eve of our entry into the war, the advance is 30 per cent. The index number for the entire year 1918 is $18.73 which is 216 per cent above the low record year 1896, tweny-two years ago.

The Crops

Of the crop outturn of 1918, it may be said that it was excellent in part, fair in other respects and bad in few, the conspicious shortages being, however, in animal feeding stuffs, hay, oats and potatoes, which has been an unavoidable element in the matter of meat production and prices. Owing to a record of spring wheat, the wheat crop as a whole was classable as good, though 100,000,000 bushels below the high record of 1914. Oats and potatoes fell off a little, but the loss in corn due to drought in the summer is hard to make up. Barley, rye, sweet potatoes, peanuts and beans and tobacco all showed record yields. Cotton yields were larger than in either of the preceding two years, but short when measured by the yield of 1914. In the matter of prices paid, farm products left little to be desired, corn, potatoes, rye, beans and cabbage being among the few showing smaller financial returns. Cereal crop values as a whole, $6,971,634,000, break all records, exceeding 1917 by 4 per cent and all crops, valued at $12,272,412,000, gained 5 per cent over the preceding year, itself a high-record point in values. These financial returns, coupled with the planting of a record area, 49,027,000 acres, in winter wheat with the third highest condition recorded, contain excellent promise for the coming year so far as the farmer is concerned ,especially so in that an excellent price is guaranteed him for 1919, in case, as is possible, a yield exceeding that of 1914 is realized.

Looking Forward

While a certain amount of the buoyancy with which the victory of the allies was greeted has disappeared, and readjustments from a war to a peace basis in industry have made for a good deal of uncertainty, due mainly to the question of the future price and disposition of unneeded war supplies, there seems to be no good reason for taking counsel of our fears as to what is to happen after peace terms are signed. Much weighty talk of problems to be solved appears in the papers, but unless all past experience is at fault, most of the problems arising are very similiar to those encountered in other periods of readjustment following widespread hostilities. If the result had been different and Germany had won, there might have been good reasons for a vast deal of worry. But civilization has won; the rattling sword, the shining armor and other "properties" of the Berlin showman, as Harden called him, have been relegated to the scrap pile, and Europe no longer has to listen with bated breath to the rantings of people who in the past had made murder and robbery profitable while masquerading under the comparatively respectable name of war. We do not believe the millennium has come, or that we have seen our last war, but something like what the poet Tennyson termed "Parliament of Nations" is about to meet, and under the agreements likely to be evolved therefrom, the world should be a safer place to live and do business in.

We believe that a big potential demand for good exists, at a price, and it is known that there is and will be a tremendous demand for food products from Europe, while materials for clothing and for shelter and implements of agriculture will probably be badly needed. The United States having suffered the least of all the belligerents should be in a position to supply these demands, as we have a good share of the food and the raw materials which the world needs, and our prestige has certainly not suffered at the hands of the two million men who have represented us in Europe. We also have—what we hitherto lacked—a big merchant marine capable of serving our importers and exporters, and our loan to allies and neutrals have given us financial footing in the markets of the world of which our bankers probably will not be slow to take advantage. If it is necessary to finance our customers throughout the world to enable us to sell goods, we can do it, because we financed Europe when the possibility of returns was not nearly so good as now. We also have a larger capacity for output and certainly greater adaptability for catering to foreign demands, whether of peace or war. In fact, we have reached in a few short years a position that it took Great Britain, the business nation par excellence, generations to achieve. Fears of unemployment of the masses should be considered with the known fact in view that immigration. which should have given us 5,000,000 persons in the past four years, has been almost at a standstill. Furthermore, we are not sure that our whole army is coming home much before a year from now. War taxes are a source of apprehension, but these too should be looked at in the light of the fact that taxation in this country has not assumed the all-prevading character imparted to it in Europe by centuries of custom and precendent. Unless most signs fail, the possibilities of future state control, interference or regulation are not so great as seemed certain when we were in the full stress of war.

Lower prices may come, not all of them at once, by the way, and may delay but should not radically interfere with the processes of proper readjustment. While war inflation may have been responsible for some of the present high prices, the latter in the last analysis merely spell scarcity, which it should be our work to remove, and in removing make business friends who will stick and customers who will come again. No headlong break in domestic prices seems probable with the purchasing power of our people so high; supply and demand conditions what they are; stocks of goods outside of government hands not burdensome; those in government control large perhaps, but promising to be liquidated conservatively; credit conditions, as reflected in failures, sound; the farms of the country such mines of wealth, and the outside world's needs so great. It really seems certain that the people and the country that have done so much in the past four years ll not falter now that peace has come and "business as usual" is again to be the watchword.

THREE GREAT SYSTEMS CLASH OVER PEACE MOVE

PARIS, Dec. 30 (Delayed).— The extraordinary session of the Chamber of Deputies which lasted straight through the night until 9 o'clock in the morning, merits the closest attention in the United States, for it indicates that the recent optimism of the American peace delegates is perhaps misplaced.

It appears that France will enter the negotiations with ideas quite different from those of America. Premier Clemenceau said he was in disagreement with President Wilson on several points, and that he supported England in the matter of the freedom of the seas. He declared himself in favor of the old system of defensive and strong special alliances.

Generally speaking it appears more and more clear that there are three great movements, each aspiring to dominate the reconstruction period.

First comes the Bolshevist movement, symbolized by Lenine and Trotzky, which desires to spread revolutionary communism throughout the world.

The second movement is the conservatism, symbolized by M. Clemenceau, which desires to utilize all the old paraphernalia of virile nationalism, such as strong armies and navies, strong alliances, wide colonial domains and the establishment of defensive frontiers and forces.

Wilson Heads Third Move

The third movement is that symbolized by President Wilson and the idea of a League of Nations, which desires to bring about disarmament compulsory arbitration, a strong international peace and international equity.

Virtually all of the existing complex disputes can be reduced to one or another of these formulas, and it is between these three that the world is now called on to decide.

The declarations in the Chamber of Deputies confirm my dispatch early in December about the decision of the French Foreign Affairs Commission to demand inclusion of the Saare basin in the Lorraine frontier and the neutralization of the left bank of the Rhine. The French admit that the Saare basin is inhabited by Prussians, but they claim it on historical grounds.

In reality this question is entirely economic. It is a question of coal, which at the present moment is the key to the whole industrial situation in Europe. Before the war France produced annually 40,000,000 tons of coal and imported 23,500,000 tons, getting from Belgium 5,000,000 tons, from England 11,000,000 and from Germany 7,000,000 tons. The restoration of Alsace and Lorraine to France will increase the coal deficit by about 11,000,000 tons, that mount being consumed by the Alsatian industries. Thus even when all the French mines are again working France will need to import more than 30,000,000 tons.

Coal Shortage Handicap

Germany before the war produced 280,000,000 tons and England nearly as much. Both England and Germany exported coal. The shortage of fuel in France was the chief handicap to French industry. Whereas, the English manufacturer paid for coal 11 francs a ton and the German 14 farncs, the French paid 25 francs. Where the German metallurgists paid for coke 15 francs the French paid 34 francs.

On the other hand Germany before the war used 60,000,000 tons of iron ore a year, of which she was obliged to import 14,000,000 tons from France, Sweden, and even Spain. Most of the German ore came from Loraine, which produced more than 20,000,000 tons. With the return of Lorraine to France, German industries will be obliged to import more than 36,000-0000 tons, while France will produce far more iron than she can use. In other words France will have vast quantities of iron, without sufficient coal, but by annexing the Saare basin the total production of which is 17,-000,000 tons a year, France would make the oal deficit.

That is why France wants the Saare. The imediate coal deficit will undoubtedly be party remedied by coal indemnities from Germany for the Northern French mines which the Germans destroyed. These indemnities to the date of the armistice were reckoned at 222,0000,000 tons. Some economists insist that what ever arrangements are made regarding the Saare basin, and other coal indemnities, France's surplus iron and Germany's surplus coal are so great that these tw ions will be obliged to agree to a terchange. However the Fren n at present seems to be to try t lement the lack of coal as far as ble by the develop-

ment of water power, with which France is richly endowed.—Los Angeles Express.

WANT NEW COUNTY

A portion of Maricopa county is conducting a campaign for its separation from the mother county, and expect soon to have enough signatures to go before the board of supervistors with a petition calling an election to settle the matter. Maricopa county should not be partitioned at this time, nor in the remote future. Small counties should be tabooed, as they create a heavy burden of taxation that has to be met by the taxpayer. The overhead of small counties is almost as great as in the large counties, without corresponding benefit. If each district would spend as much extra money as the new governemnt would cost it they would sustain a much greater benefit. The excess political population would bring little but grief to a town getting a county seat and would add but little to its dignity.

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